

Adams, Ramon Frederick
Poems of the Canadian West

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1919

POEMS
.. OF THE ..
CANADIAN WEST



R. F. ADAMS

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EVANS & HASTINGS, PRINTERS
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*I dedicate this volume of verse to MY FATHER,
who has taken a wise and appreciative interest in
my literary efforts.*

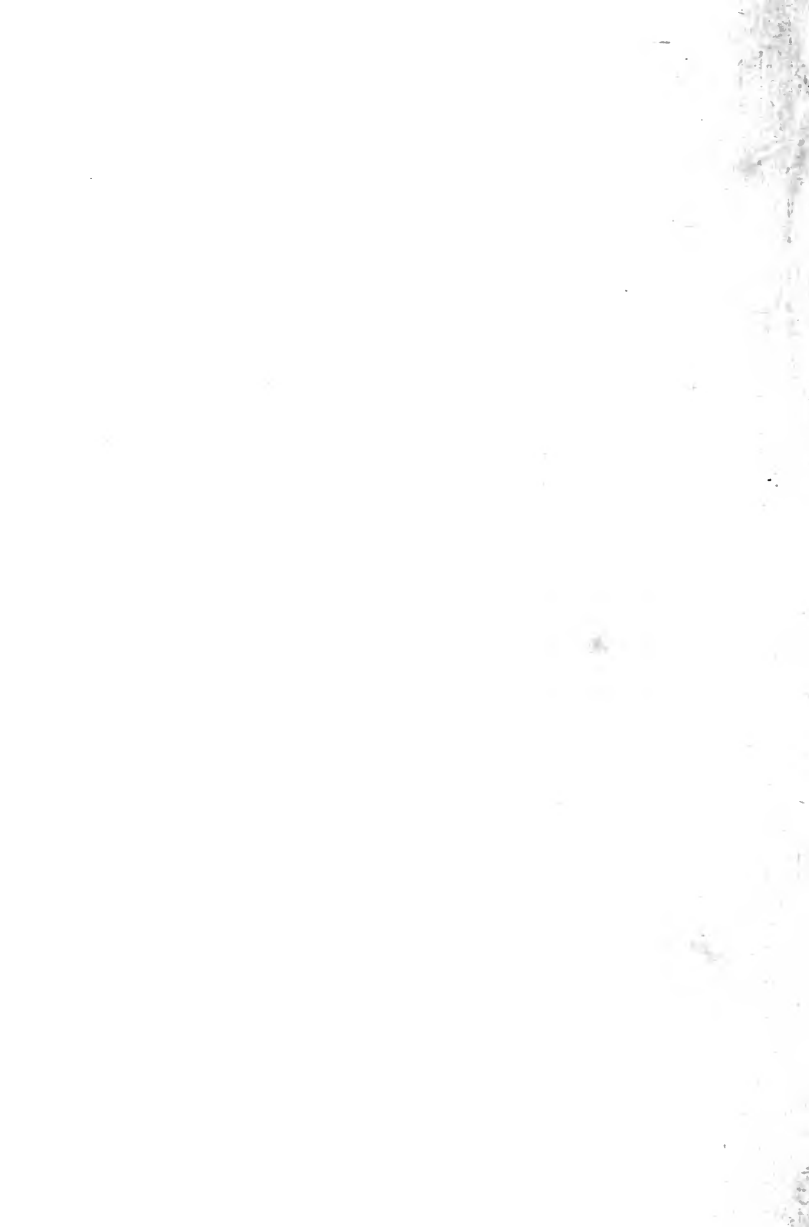
R. F. ADAMS.

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R. F. ADAMS



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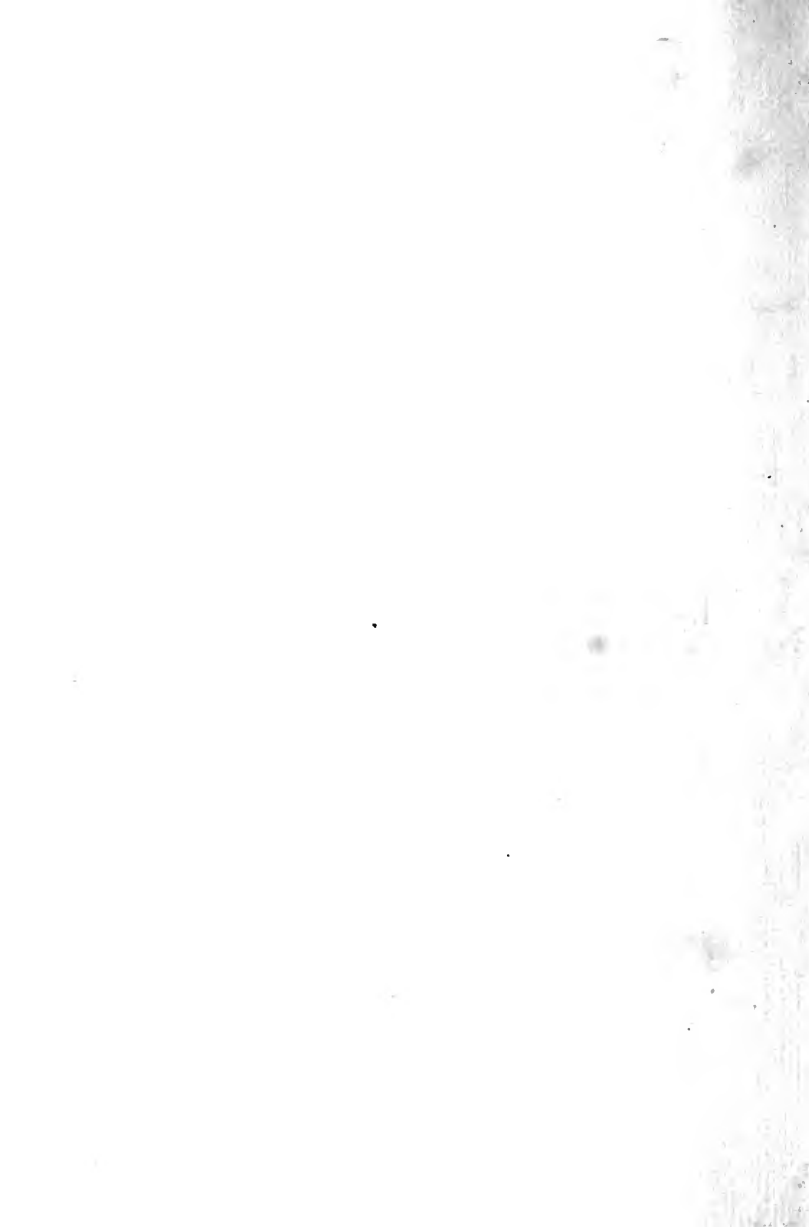
THE POET'S CREED

To bathe the soul in the vast deep of heaven,
 And catch the whispers from the lips of God;
To make of the yeast of life a wholesome leaven,
 And stand by the common bush with feet unshod.

To make Truth bridegroom, gleaming as evening star
 That hangs a jewel on the robe of night,
Stretching out loving hands to the altar where
 Art waits in robes of white,

And claims her as his bride in wedded love:
 Then Freedom sends them forth with clarion-call
To sound the depths of the human heart, and prove
 That love to humankind is all in all.

I.—SONGS OF THE PRAIRIE



THE CALL OF THE WEST

Autumn comes again with sun-flush'd cheek and
waving golden hair,

To roam the meadow-spaces from clear dawn to
saffron eve,

Pausing by the silent hollow, golden-wing'd by sun-
set's glare,

Softly lipping draughts of music where the mur-
muring night-winds grieve.

Often voices whisper, "Thither roam to where the
ripples fall

With a plash of light-flung music on the weather-
beaten shore:

Dwell again by moon-lit waters, hear the lake-mew's
lonely call,

Dream of evening fade in splendour through
night's filmy star-lit door.

"There the waving wheat-land nestles in the hollow of
the plain,

There the Angel of the evening stoops to drink a
draught of peace,

There the boundless grey savannahs wave ambrosial
in the rain,

There the mystic tongues of Nature carol songs
that never cease."

I'll away while now the heaven of youth is shining
cloudless bright,
And the pulses throb with passion for the freedom
of the plain.
When the night breathes ponderous silence and the sky
gleams swords of light,
Then I'll sing as west I wander by the lightly-
waving grain.

IN THE VALLEY AT ESTEVAN SASK.

The wilds are calling me,
 Calling from afar ;
The sounds are following me
 From the windy bar
By the silent-flowing stream,
 Where new mem'ries are.

The morning is calling me,
 Dreaming of the dew ;
The sunlight is following me
 The green woods through.
And the valley was radiant
 With heaven and you.

And you are calling me—
 When shall I go ?
By the pale glimmer of morning,
 Or sunset's full flow
Of radiancy streaming
 The valley below ?

THE LAKE

I have a lake, a pure and lonely gem
Cut in the fading emerald of the hills.
And when the lone-lit star his radiance spills
Emerging from a coral cloud, I go
And pay my homage where the rushes grow.

One day with smile and ripple this loved lake
Spoke out and told me of its loneliness.
And I beheld its perfect stateliness,
As wearing gown, pure as the frail snow-flake,
Scintillant with sun-lit gems, it greeted me
And I stooped down and kissed its lips in glee.

It said: "I've seen a long, long tract of life;
For I was born before the buffaloes roamed
The dipping plain, before the Crowfeet homed
In their rough wigwams, long before
The pale-faced visitant first beheld my shore.

"Here came a sun-bronzed Mélisande to view
Her face, and form, and raven-shining hair.
But I was coldly heedless to her fair
But passionless beauty. She would often stay
Gazing at me from dawn to hushed noon-day.

“When over me the magic moonlight fell
And made a golden glory of my face,
I heard the distant humming of the praise
Of a lone returning wanderer, who sang
His evening hymns to my glad soul with strong,

“Hot quiverings, as of player on the lute,
Who feels the burning ecstasy of love
And plays his vibrant melody to prove
How yearns his soul. So rang his heart-glad tone.
And then he vanish’d, leaving me alone.”

When fell a brief, deep silence I replied:

“I’ll tryst with thee while dreams the summer long.
How can I leave thee to thy splendour lone,
When Evening like a bird to her nest has flown,
And uncompanionable stars look down

In dim-lit splendour, from the night-hushed deep.
As queen of the plain I’ll gladly thee enthrone.”

PEACE AT EVENTIDE

No ripple of air,
Still the lake's bosom,
Dream-shadows rare
Lie on the hill.
The silk-woven hair
That the cloud-drifts wear,
Is rose-touched and still.

The arm of Night flung
To embrace the soul;
Heaven's blue dome hung
With the dim-lit stars.
And a light song sung
To a dulcimer-tone,
'Neath the low sod-roof,
Where I dream alone.

A LAMENT

(The subject of this poem is Dusty, a little fox-terrier, about six months old, who was killed on the shore of Fife Lake, Southern Saskatchewan, greatly to the regret of all of us.—August, 1916.)

Here the mound of prairie-sod,
Wet with the tears of dew,
When Night a-mourning flew
And touched the thirsty clod.
She wept, and winds could scarce refrain
Their grief when morning came again.

Gone like the fragile cloud
Borne seaward by the wind.
Fate! thou art all unkind
To weave his lonely shroud.
Wind and wave make louder moan:
Here he rests all, all alone!

Lonely, lonely sandy shore!
Lonely, lonely lake and lea!
Now we'll miss thy careless glee,
We will mourn thee evermore.
Wind and wave make louder moan:
Here he slumbers all alone!

THE MYSTIC PRESENCE

I see Thee in the sheathless sword of grass,

 The purple splendour of the crocus-leaf :

I feel Thee in the zephyrs as they pass

 Far to the shining sea and cloud-built reef.

I hear Thee in the laughing of the brook,

 The flute-note of the lark's undying song ;

And in the shelter of a quiet nook

 I see Thy flitting wings dipping among

The silvered ripples of the sun-bathed mere :

And in the pauses when the night-wind drear

 Makes feebler moan,

 All, all alone

 Unfaltering footsteps fall

 On the hushed ear of night.

And a voice speaks in the tremulous joy of a star :

 "This is the soul's delight."

SONG AMID SHOWERS

The day is sad and dreary,
The curlews cry :
The wind is all a-weary,
And the sedges sigh.
But I am happy roaming
On this boundless billowy plain,
With the white-faced kine a-homing
In the plashing rain.

Hearts are sad and lonely
At this sorrowing hour,
Saying, "Life is only
Like a dew-wept shower."
But I am happy roaming,
For I hear Thy voice
Whisper softly in the gloaming,
"Life will have new joys."

The evenfall waits wondering
With footsteps hushed,
And the burdened clouds are thundering,
And the rain has rushed
Down to kiss the thirsty prairie-sod
And drench the thirsty loam,
And the air is softly vibrant
With the songs of home

And I am happy roaming
On this boundless billowy plain,
With the white-faced kine a-homing
In the plashing rain.

THE HILLS OF GLADMAR

I love the hills, those purple hills
Clad in the grey of morning ;
I love them when a glory fills
The rose-hung west at evening.
The light may die from sun and star,
And linkéd loves may sever ;
But those fair hills that loom afar
I'll love them, love them ever.

TO A BLUE-WINGED BUTTERFLY

Little sprite of the sun-dipt lea!
Whither following on?
Wilt thou not tarry an hour with me
In the peace of the rose-gold dawn?
Stay! little fairy, so fleet of wing,
For the wind will weary thee,
As it wearies the foam-streaked waves that sing
To the pulse of the throbbing sea.

Were thy frail wings dipt in the limpid blue
Of heaven? or wert thou clad
In thy blue gauze coat so shining and new,
Which the angel-fingers made?
Silent, silent, no whirr of wings,
Thou'rt away with the drifting wind,
Happier far than a thousand kings;
But, alas! thou hast left me behind.

THE PULSE OF LOVE

PRELUDE

My harp was silent, then Thy fingers led
My faltering touch, evoking rapturous song:
Like a veiled sunbeam flashing swift along
The prone edge of a cloud, so Thy notes sped
Divinely tender. Nor was I filled with dread
At Thy companionable presence, but among
The perfect lilies of Thy thoughts my strong
Love-passion grew, tho' it was erewhile dead.
What is my theme of song? One theme is mine,
Divinest theme of all, Thy quenchless love.
And through my every song I well can prove
Love blends his soul-enchancing symphony.
For all that heaven and earth and dim eternity
Can give or utter is Thy Father-love.

I.

Wonderest thou if ever I feel alone
Here in this ocean of unending plain?
With never a brook to lilt his joyous strain
Or wild winds to the tumbling breakers moan.

Nor ever hear the wild bees' humming drone,
As honey-laden through the primrose lane
And clover meadows they flit home again
And Evening smile to the pure lilies blown.
No! I am never lonely, for the hills,
Like angel-sentinels, guard my heritage
Of grass and greenening wheat, where the dew spills
Its wealth of sunlit gems and asks no wage;
And by the sandy verge of the shining mere
Thy presence every passionate moment fills.

II.

If one should say that, like a sunset flame
That wanders into darkness and is lost,
Thou shouldst pass out and leave my grey life
tossed
And tangled in its loneliness, no blame
Would I impute to thee, for thou the same
Pure honourable soul wouldst pay the cost:
Not in vain tears, nor with vexed sighs engrossed,
But thou wouldst strive to strengthen love's lost claim.
For in the hushed evening hour, when into view
There floats thine image redolent with life,
I know that we shall venture forth as one;
One language coined by love, one purpose true,—
The bringing of all life to fruitage new,
Nor pausing till life's holy war is won.

III.

Where wert thou then when I was far away
 In that green isle, rich in the lore of song,
 Dreaming glad dreams the purple hills among,
Drinking the wine of sunset on the bay;
Stealing along the beach where night-winds stray
 That startle the ocean into passion strong,—
 As lover soul-disturbed the whole night long
Dreams of his love until the dawn of day?
Where wert thou? Ah! I know that thou wert there
 In that loved valley where the violets blow,
 Wading knee-deep amid the silent flow
Of wandering waters, drinking the dew-sweet air,
With golden flowers hung on thy streaming hair,
 Praying that Dawn's light foot-fall might be slow.

IV.

When the swift moon-gleams smote the rose-lit sward,
 And I had left thee with a hungering heart;
 Then a thought pierced me like a swift-flung dart,
And Love's bright vision for the hour was blurred.
Some other won thy love, and now the word
 Was pledged in troth, and we must drift apart.
 Wert thou then trading in the secret mart
Of Love's affection, and hadst royally fared?

Wild words are these! O never, never thine
Strong Love, but only suited for a hearth
Where burns the fuel of a weaken'd faith
With faint, unholy glimmer. Hence, vain thought!
The heavens whisper that thou still art mine,
And can but with the coin of love be bought.

V.

Now we must part, and I the lonely road
Must travel till the setting of the sun,
When Love's glad pilgrimage had just begun,
And we had sought to bear each other's load.
And I upon the mountain-peak which glowed
With Love's pure rose-light dreamt that I had won
The crown of thine affection, and that none
But I would wear it while Life's pure stream flowed.
But now the dawn is shot with dusking ray,
And where the vast horizon spreads its glow,
No shining golden lane of light I know;
And Love lies silent in his empty hall;
And Hope takes up his broken harp to play
As I go lonely to Life's instant call.

A SONG OF THE PRAIRIE

Isle of the bards of Tara's fame, my wreath of song
was thine

When love sang life and laughter in the gloam,
And peace was on the pastures far where dawn-lit
jewels shone,

And songs came drifting homeward o'er the foam.

And mystic sweet the budding-time, the voices on the
lea,

The waking of the primrose in the glen,
The low and dreamful music of the joy-enkindled
sea,—

I dream of thrilling star-gemmed nights again.

But I'm bound by silken cords of love to this broad
prairie-plain,

To the canyons, and the lakes, and wrinkled hills;
To the purling streams, and sloping vales, and coulées
dipt in green,

Which Spring anew with matchless music fills.

THE THREE GOPHERS

Three gophers hid in an amber nest
Of the wind-rippling wheat:
And the plain was a lake of spangled mist,
Where paced Dawn's light-shod feet.
And theirs was a grievous tale to hear,
Of a hundred comrades gone
To sleep the dread last sleep, where the mere
Mirrors the moonlight wan.

They gravely talked; then scampered away
To their subterranean homes:
And before the drooping eyelids of day
Were closed, and the silent poems
Were sung by the minstrel stars to the Night,
The whole, vast, honey-combed plain
Was astir with the language that gophers know
And the throb of grief for the slain.

Spring came and the young green wheat rose frail
From the bed of the sun-kissed soil;
The gophers three told another tale
Of how they had dared to foil
The callous hands that had planned their doom,
And ah! their revenge was sweet.
At every poisonous snare were the words,—
"We diet on young green wheat."

SONGS OF THE NIGHT

Think not the night is silent, for its soul
Sings song unutterable, magical symphony.
Out where the crimson wake of sunset lies
Stir the hushed lutes of half-awakened stars.
And on the long-mute bars
Of its golden viol, the moon
With trembling fingers chords a reposeful tune.

Whither ebbs the melody? Is there no ear
To hear the magical swift litanies?
No soul nursed in the dreams of song to pause
In the long and dreamful silence of the night's awaken-
ing,
To hear the wizard melodies of those spheres
That move in the undiscoverable inane?

If mortals hear not then the angels pause
In their love-inspired tasks, and hear the songs
Dilate with perfect harmony and drift
On heavenly breezes. Chorus to chorus sings,
And harp and lute and viol assembling all
The wandering echoes into one grand unison,
Fill the vast space of Heaven's cathedral. Then the
songs drift away
Into the pauseful peace of endless day.

THE MEETING

Restless he stood all flecked with foam,
Proud-arched of neck, and fire-lit of eye;
And he looked away to the hills of home,
And for them hungered passionately.
The reins lay loose; with light-hoofed pace
He passed to the gate, and entered the stall.
The sacredness of the memoried place
Touched his heart, and thrilled him all.

Halterless he entered the night,
Dreams had come to the rounded hills,
And, thrilled with the touch of the soft starlight,
We watched him, where Peace often fills
His tankard to the sparkling brim.
He neighed. The echo stole apace
And reached the ears of his startled dam,
And swift as thought from the open space
All knowingly she answered him.
Then the swift hoof smote the dewed soil,
And they were one in Night's embrace.

THE COWBOY'S PRAYER

Whoe'er Thou art, Great Governor of all!

Didst Thou stretch out the prairie broad and pure?
And bring the bronco colt to the mother's stall?

And give to these western wilds their nameless
lure?

And when the long gleam falls on the ripening wheat,
Is it Thou that mak'st life's ruddy wine taste sweet?

If Thou art He, then pity, pity me,

For I have shamed Thee, wronged Thee, cursed
Thee too;

Drunk with the sots and thought it devilish glee,

And oft lay stupored in the midnight dew.

If Thou wilt lead me by the westering trail

Where life is clean and sweet, then help me not to fail.

FRIENDLESS AND ALONE

(The subject of this poem is a Danish settler, Canute Petersen, a bachelor of middle age, and living alone in a newly-settled part of Southern Saskatchewan. His last days were made burdensome by the indifference and unkindly treatment of neighbours. A few days before he died a friend of the writer's took him to his home, where he passed away contented and peaceful.)

They've left him alone! they've left him alone
With never a kindly voice to speak
A farewell word, but only the moan
Of the night-wind calling him over the creek.

My heart was sad for him when I knew
That his life ebbed out on a pallet of straw,
Unbefriended the long days through,
And mine was the only face he saw.

Sad shame! left friendless and alone
To die like a slave on a foreign sod.
O human hearts that have turned to stone!
You have earned the eternal curse of God.

But you have come to give him grace,
And bring him to where the lake-waves foam,
And a light will kindle upon his face
When he lies in the peace of your hill-girt home.

And the sorrow of his years will cease,
And kindly voices will say farewell,
And his wasted body will find release
At the dreamful tolling of evening bell.

QUEEN OF THE NIGHT

Queen of the night! honoured by loyal stars
With silent homage toward thy cloud-built throne;
Carest thou that Earth's heart is pained with wars?
Or dost thou wander proudly and alone?
'Tis my fixed thought that when the red-skin'd braves
Rode battle-mad across this trackless plain,
And made a thousand sad untimely graves,
Thou didst not weep nor veil thy splendour vain.
And I well know thy curious eye doth dare
To banish darkness from the world of night.
Thou seest the virgin clouds combing their hair
In secret chambers, shining with saffron light.
And thou in thy blue-domed halls does queenly move,
But all companionless, forlorn of love.

BY THE GOLDEN SHEAVES

She stood beside the golden sheaves

When the dimpled hills were mantled with gleam;
And her dreams were mingled with autumn leaves,
That fell by a far-flowing silent stream.

In dream she paused by the palace-hall

Where the nobles met and duels were dared;
And all night long by the casement heard
The lilt of song and the dance of love.

And around her the incense of jasmine rare
Floated far out on the midnight breeze,

And her soul was one with the stars above.

The Grand Duke Boris had offered his love,

His heart, his life, his princely all;
But within her wilful soul she strove
To lay aside this passion-call.

And now on this far-sheaved prairie-plain

The sunrise glow of love had come.
But who was he that could well attain
What nobles had risked their lives to gain?

He was a son of the Norsemen bold,

And his heart beat brave, and his hands knew toil.
It was long-forgotten what sire of old
Had left the wild seas for the dusty soil.

But he knew nothing of mast or sails ;
His only sea was the prairie-plain,
Billowing gently, and vexed with trails,
Thirsting in summer for dew and rain.

Come nigh, O Love! and unite them here
As soul seeks soul in the white moon-ray.
This is the country they hold so dear,
The country of Freedom's unchanging sway.
And let their children be Canada's pride,
Ready to answer her trumpet-call.
Lust and riches and ease denied,
And a song on their lips when they fight and fall.

TO A WILD ROSE

I found thee on the sloping sward,
Opening thy lips to the dew ;
Thou hadst slept the long night through,
And awoke to the rain-bird's call.
And thy delicate bosom was touched with gold
Where the wooing sunbeams fall.

Wert thou mothered by cloud snow-white?
So winsome and pure of face!
Didst thou catch that rare, rare grace
From the moon as she sails at night?
The butterfly scarce could wait till the dawn
To kiss thee in love's first flight.

O angel of the whispering lea!
Wilt thou soon fly away?
And leaving thy couch of clay
To dream-haunted Avalon flee,
Where thy spirit will rest in dreams of love
To the song of the ebbing sea?

I'll mourn thee on paths long trod
For thy fragrance all too rare
That distils on the evening air,
And quickens the passionless sod.
I'll mourn, but thou wilt come again
Revived by the touch of God.

WAITING

Come, for the roses await thee,
The whisper of summer floats by,
And the soul of this ocean-like prairie
Is thrilled with eternal joy.
For unseen wings are aquiver,
Stirring the motionless air,
And peace flows down like a river,
And evening is one red flare.

Come, for the hills are speaking
In language I know not now;
And the moon imperial waking,
Sails o'er the jagged brow
Of a storm-spent cloud, and all lonely
Sighs for her love long gone:
Come, for the evening has only
Begun, and afar is the dawn.

THE GLORY OF DAWN

How glorious the awakening of the day!
When the flaming deep calls to the soul's pure deep
From out the regions of beshadowed sleep;
And lightning-gleams like sheening dolphins play
On the crimson-emerald sky,
Flashing unceasingly,
While unlit meadows yearn to kiss the dawn.
The joy of Thy hovering presence
Makes music of the silence,
And knits my love-enkindled soul to Thee.

AT THE MORNING HOUR

In the peace-laden valley the dappled kine are resting,
And lonely are the meadows, for the winds have
ceased to play;
And here at this hour my soul with thee is trysting,
And life has no shadows grey.
For I love each drop of nectar from Life's wine-cup,
Each jewel shining from its golden crown.
My tide comes in with hush of song's enchantment,
Singing till the stars go down.

MEMORIES

I have rare memories multitudinous
Dwelling in homes of sod, of sea and light,
Afar in the dawnlight's width of streaming seas,
Where coral clouds arise like mist-hung reefs:
Or on the winding trail to those soft-curved hills
That dream in enchanted peace the long night through,
Or in the valley where the zephyrs wait
With footsteps hushed in wonder at the moon;
Or coming with a pause by the lonely door
Where thou wert waiting in the sunset sheen,
When all the glory of the evening hung
About the meadows and the dew-dripping air.
And the parting of that soul-enchanting hour
Lives silent, pure, and tender as the tarn
That dwells in mountain stillness, dreaming long,
And holding deep within its trembling soul
The image of the blossomy veil of skies,
Kissed by the streaming roselight of the dawn.

II.—POEMS OF THE FAR WEST

BOAT SONG

O! I'll away in my boat to-day,
For the wind is whistling free;
No great white gown of mist stoops down
To shadow the shining sea.
My boat calls out: "I'm all afloat
And ready for wind and wave."
The cedars whisper, the waves grow crisper,
And like the Vikings brave
Who sent their stout ships wandering far
Over the dusky sea,
I peak the sail to the dashing gale,
While the wizard rainbows flee.

Where shall I go on the tide's full flow?
To the isle by the sunset's marge,
Where the scent of the pines the breeze refines,
Where the billows loom out large.
Give me the sweep of the ocean-deep,
The song of the dripping prow;
Give me a laugh, as the wild seas quaff
The sunlight, and know not how
To sigh or sorrow, but love to borrow
The cheer that floods the free;
Give me the thrill, as the foam-waves spill
O'er the starboard beam in glee.

I'll not come back o'er the ocean-track
For many a long, long day ;
But I'll cruise each cove where the salmon rove,
And wait on the moonless bay
To dip my oar, far, far from shore
In the phosphorescent wave ;
And then to dreams while the salt sea streams
Some narrow tortuous cave.
And the stars that roam through the dusky dome
Shall be my guardians all,
And my little sail will tell its tale
To zephyrs at evenfall.

A SONG OF WELCOME

(Composed immediately prior to the visit of the Duke of Connaught to Vancouver, Sept. 19, 1912.)

I.

Welcome! our liege of peace,
Kinsman to England's crown;
This Venice fair awaits thee now
Aglow in bannered gown.
This City Queen that crowns with grace
Thy realm's far Western rim,
Turns now to thee its loyal face,
Dons bright its garb of royal lace,
And, flushing deep with maiden-grace,
Sings thee a loyal hymn.

II.

Twelve moons have gleamed and waned,
Since first in royal state,
Thy voice from stately dais rose
And wove the nation's fate.
And clear as flows the crystal rill
Whose music stirs the sea,
Thy thoughts have left their source and flowed,
And clearly flowed and deeper glowed,

And in the lowliest heart have sowed
The joys of fealty.
From o'er the sea, triumphantly
They honour thee with praise,
And East and West clasp hands in zest
To spread thy name ablaze.

III.

O Mohawk prince of old!
Who o'er his braves did reign.
From wigwam by the Lakes' long shore
To wigwam on the plain;
Thy name hath crept from voice to voice
In tones of deepest awe;
A Second Spirit Great art thou
Who smokes the Calumet, till now
The fumes have spent and angered brow
Is soothed by Freedom's law.
And chief and brave, subdued and grave,
Prosper in peaceful ways;
And tomahawk lies shelved in rock,
A pride of other days.

O Autumn! drooping fair,
Shine golden from the East!
Shine golden from the West!
Till gleaming shower hath ceased.

Awaken into glowing beam
And speed the royal guest,
His long-loved spouse of memory fair,
His princess dowered in beauty rare.
Lull the wild blasts that sweep the air
And steep in dew the West.
Arise! Arise! O hearts arise!
And wave the banner free,
And hoist with pride, full far and wide,
The flag that rules the sea.

TO AUTUMN

O Autumn, fairest nymph of golden tresses!
Again thou comest with thy fairy tread;
On leaf and flower imprinting ardent kisses,
Till soon the maple blushes fiery red.
And slowly o'er the forest waving tender
Thou stealest with thy magic brush in hand,
Painting in russet every leaflet slender,
Till dell and woodland bear thy golden brand.
And Dryad with a softly-falling whisper
Meets thee with a sigh for other days,
Seeing her realm derobed, the breeze grow crisper,
Her bower unroofed, a sadder season-phase.
Immortal nymph, dew not thine eyes with tears,
For there is One who guides the circling years.

THE PAUSE

(Somewhere in the Rockies, Sept. 28, 1918)

Halts the long train; the car's loud din gives pause
To the long-born stillness of the pine-laden air:
And through the woods, made golden here and
there
By Autumn's finger, the mist reluctant draws
Its slow but tireless feet. All that was
Of yesterday lies behind,—thoughts that deter
The onward march to Life's triumph, days that
wear
Love's rosy garland, deeds without applause.

Before,—lie speechless hopes, battles unborn,
Triumphs yet unattained, swift hours of toil;
And the long, sore disappointments bravely borne,
And leaps into the darkness,—laughter too,
And snatches of song from under the midnight
blue.
And cups of nectar flushed with Life's young morn.

EMPTY HALLS

(After arriving in Vancouver, Sept. 30, 1918)

Gone are they all as sails that take the sea
At evening ebb-tide, outward moving far.
Theirs the calm radiance of the risen star,
Glad offering on the altar of the free.
And if to-morrow they should hear by plea
Of former comradeship Time cannot mar,—
Nor the rough pitiless hands of War can scar,
And come back here and spend new hours with me,—
Then would War's ominous shadow swiftly fail,
And life-abounding hours glide on serene,
And all unheeding we would richly glean
From the store made through contact soul with soul.
For they had seen the white sword bathed in blood
And found 'mid scourge and pain the Holy Grail.

PEACE BY THE RIVER

Peace here by this silent river,
After War's clash of shattering towers,
After the long night's dark endeavour
And ghastly dawn, and death-long hours.

Here memories call from peaks mist-folded,
And incense drifts from cedar and pine,
And maples that lie in valleys long moulded
Drink from the flood of sunset-wine.

And Thou, the Glory of all, beholding,
Dost sweep the mist from watching eyes.
This is the hour of grimly holding
The faith that looks to a new sunrise.

TO THE PINES AND CEDARS THAT KEEP VIGIL NEAR ENGLISH BAY, VANCOUVER, B.C.

Comrades old!

Faithful and silent, breathing the balm of peace!
Autumn cannot touch you with flying gold,
Winter cannot disturb your youth's long lease.

Comrades old!

Lift me in kindly arms and hold me fast,
And whisper songs and light-flowing rhythms long
told
When Summer's murmurous music passed.

And here by the shore your benediction will fall
Soft as the utterless weeping of Summer dew,
And I will come in my boat at evening-call
Unwearied of soul, and tryst the midnight through.

And I will venture from shore where no waves foam,
Out beyond utmost dreams, far beyond hope of
dying,
And there will float around me the songs of home,
And from afar I'll hear your long sighing, sighing.

SONG AND SILENCE

There the mists of the purple hills
 Cling to the jewelled robe of night;
There the joy of the valley fills
 The chance, lone wanderer with delight.

There the wheatland vast is flung
 With waving wealth of Autumn hue;
There the songs of life are sung
 To sweet-voiced tones that Orpheus knew.

There! there, O plains! my lute long-hushed
 Burst into song—I sang the lay
Of lake and lea and rose half-flushed,
 And streams that flow un murmuringly.

But here within this mountain zone
 O voice of Nature sing thy lay!
From peak to peak where chill winds groan,
 From cedar'd nook to shimmering bay!

Thou needst not that I should sing,
 So liquid clear thy full-toned voice.
O that my lute, even whispering,
 Might breathe the music of thy joys!

BY THE SHORE OF THE SEA

The day dies,
And the winds are shut in the cave of sleep ;
The waves rise
And race like squadrons from out the dusky deep.
Like an opal gem set in a golden ring
The hills their long watch keep.

So here by the shore
We dwell for Life's hasting day, then breast the foam.
O! for the roar
Of howling winds when the call comes to sail out
home.
My boat will be ready here by the sea's dark marge,
And kindly eyes will gaze as I seaward roam.

THE UNSEEN COMPANION

Night! and the woods are silent,
The stars are as daisies sown
O'er the lonely meadows of heaven,
Swept bare where the winds have blown.

The croon of the deathless ocean
Beyond where the cedars nod:
Nearer than voice or breathing,
The long-loved thrill of God.

III.—POEMS OF THE WAR

(1914-1918)



DISAPPOINTMENT

Soldier! who left love's hearth and life's calm call
To keep the flag of liberty aloft;
Honour for thee to dare the fight and fall,
And pride when War's torn raiment thou hast
doffed.
Thy going forth is as a knight of old
Who binds his soul to deeds of courtliness;
Training his spirit to a finer mould,
Knowing the strength of Faith and Holiness.
But sorer than bitter death is waiting here,
When holy fires of war rage through the soul;
For Empire offered all that life holds dear,
And counted out to give is Honour's toll.
And all is done but join the battle-line,
And taste the bitter-sweet of War's red wine.

TO THE MEMORY OF RUPERT BROOKE

Soldier and Poet, Obiit April 23, 1915

There is a lonely grave in Scyros isle
Where the blue evening keeps with holy sigh
Her lonely vigil, and the night-waters sing
Their haunting dirges. Through the long glooming
aisle
Of olive groves the downcast mourners file.
And we who have known thy lute's rich offer-
ing
Of song, proclaim thine immortality.

II.

Art thou then dead? lips still? hands folded fast
In long-abiding sleep? Eyes speechless, too?
A pilgrim down the shadowy silence passed?
Not dead! On peerless heights thou art drunk
anew
With the subtle magic of soul-uttered song.
And where the silent wings of morning flew,
Thou watchest like a diver, braced and strong,
Ere into untried depths all cleanly leaping
Poises to fling him headlong in the deep;

So thou in that far world devoid of weeping
Into new seas of song dost poise to leap.

III.

Thy song was of the sunrise, rich with glow,
Like nectar for the thirsting soul of youth:
Calm, steady, radiant, like the gradual flow
Of sunset-laden waters,—rife with truth.
Truth of life's laughter, truth of love's strong wine,
Truth of the soul that lays immortal all
On Empire's altar, at her clarion-call.

IV.

I've stayed at Grantchester,
(In vision tarried there)
I've seen the Vicarage dear to thee,
And lipped the honey rare.
I've heard the musing, wandering stream
Grow eloquent by the Pool,
Where Tennyson's shade and Chaucer's dream
In the dew-washed meadows cool.
And the smell of the sod was sweet to me,
And sweet was the musk-rose wine:
For there thy soul so passionately
Sang life to tones divine.

THE PREVAILING VOICE

Falls Night's veil,
Evening's sail
Drifts upon the homeless wave.
On the plains beyond the sea
War's wild voices moan and rave.

By the shore
Hushed from roar
Stained where blood of sunset falls;
From within a lonely door
Issue upward other calls.

For a mother kneels to pray
As the gloaming fills the bay
Where is now her long-loved son?
Does he slumber 'neath the clay?

Does the blood
That doth flood
Those fair fields dyed richer red,
Tell of Love's defeated power?
Tell of souls that vainly bled?

In that lonely kneeling form
Is the answer of the night.
Who shall veil Love's deathless Light
Bursting forth behind the storm?

HIS DISTANT LOVER

Lonely she,
From the sea
No news come to thrill her all.
Has he fallen on the field,
Wound about in Death's dark pall?

She weeps not,
She keeps not
Her hushed grief like measured gold:
Weaving not on Fancy's loom
Dreams of sad love as of old.

But she stays,
Bravely stays
With her hand in Duty's hand.
She has lilies pure to grow
On Life's rich and lonely land.

* * * *

Evening puts dark raiment on,
Calls aloud to the waking star;
Then she dips her pitcher down
Where Love's deep-hushed waters are.

LOVE'S CALL

O Love come hither now

From the vexed plains of war!

For here by this mountain brow

I wait like a lonely star.

And softly are the brown kine lowing,

The wild lone stream is swiftly flowing,

My stream of song is outward going,

Out to Love's vast deep.

The cedar-shadows haunt the river,

The moon thrusts out a perfect round

And makes the dark wave gleam and quiver;

The woods are empty of stir or sound.

But softly are the brown kine lowing,

The wild lone stream is swift of flowing,

My stream of song is outward going,

Out to Love's vast deep.

THE VICTOR

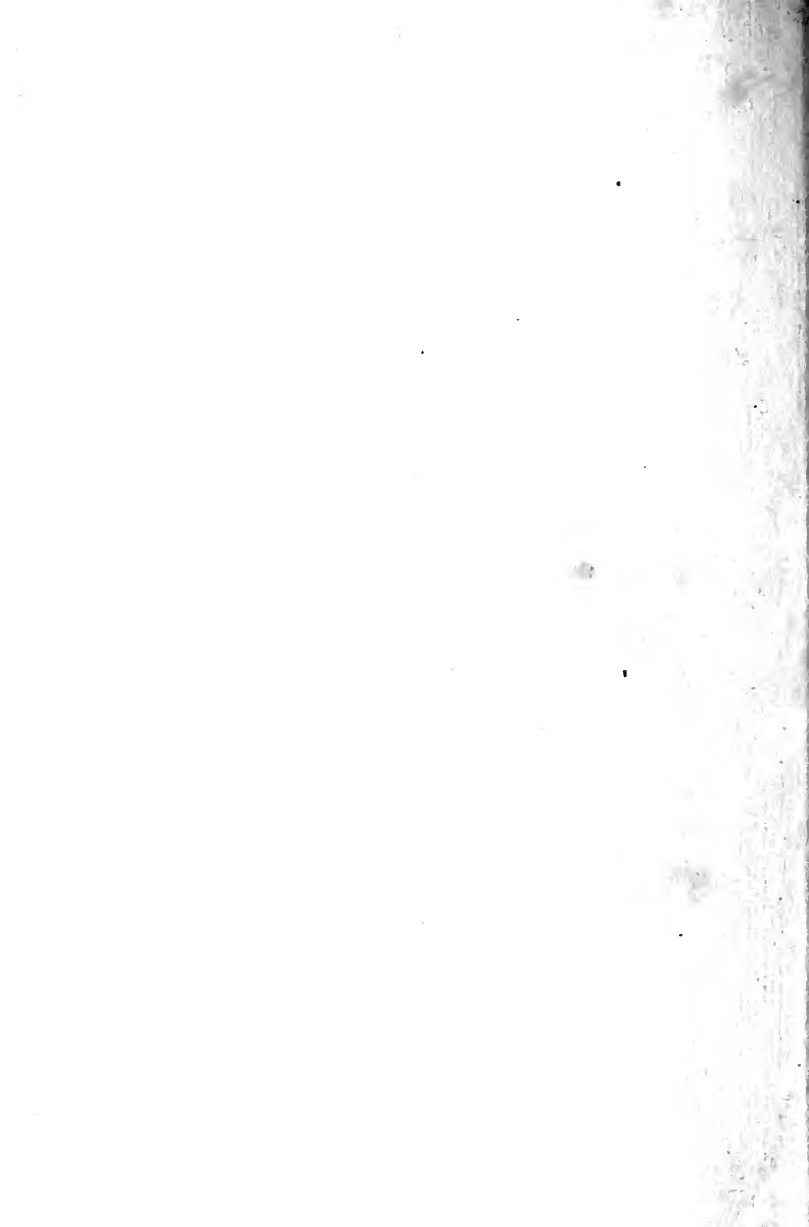
There came to a seaside town in Southern France
A man plain of attire, disguised in rank.
And in the cool shade when the daylight sank
A boy who had been playing with sword and lance
Came and sat by him, knowing not that here
Was France's greatest marshal, commander when
The German hordes, plunging in mad career,
Were swept to defeat by Honour's fearless men.
The boy talked and found the stranger wise
In lore of war, and tales that thrill young ears.
Then suddenly he spread a portrait wide
And, fixing the Marshal with his knowing eyes,
Cried: "Victor in disguise! Victor in disguise!"
The Marshal said: "Not victor, only guide."

HOME - COMING

Far from the death-smitten fields of gore
Where many a young lip kissed the earth,
The sons of Empire who bravely bore
The laurels of freedom come back to their mirth.

Some come back to a lonely hearth
To find a mother's dear face gone.
O give them of love and give them of mirth,
And cheer them with song for life's new dawn.

IV.--MISCELLANEOUS



THE CALL OF THE POET

The dawnlight bursting from its prison of night,
The silence of the radiant shimmering sand
Invaded when the sea-hawk skims in flight:

 This is the poet's call.

The thrill of towering mountain-peak at dawn
Seen when he dons his robe of silvery haze,
Seen with the rose of evening o'er him drawn:

 This is the poet's call.

The playful buffeting of wind and sea
Upon the cheek and brow when ebbs the day,
Kissed by the sea's harsh lips impassionately:

 This is the poet's call.

The vastitude of ocean lit with foam,
Rippling into phosphorescent gleam;
The galaxy of heaven's starlit home:

 This is the poet's call.

COMMUNION

He lifts the veil to pause with raptured soul,
Borne strangely upward on invisible wings.
And peering through the gate where Evening
flings

Her golden shadows far beyond the roll
And rush of worlds, he sees the star-lit stole
Of woof divine that round Heaven's body clings,
And spaces where strong angel-feet patrol.

Deep silence falls ; glory on glory shines,
And flitting earthward from his throne of peace
An angel pauses by the snow-white bed
Where little hands are clasped and laughter fled.
And, pausing till the lips from praying cease,
Brings back the prayer with pulsing joy to God.

IN SNOWLAND

"Who dwell in those palaces gleaming

In caves of the sunlit snow?"

Little Marjorie said to me dreaming,

"Who dwell in those palaces gleaming

So pure and beautiful seeming?"—

Till I'd answer she'd trouble me so.

"Who dwell in those palaces gleaming

In caves of the sunlit snow?"

"There's a Snowland happier gleaming

Far purer than purest snow,"

I said to Marjorie beaming,

There's a Snowland happier gleaming—

And the golden sunset came streaming

And Marjorie seemed to know

There's a Snowland happier gleaming

Far purer than purest snow.

A RONDEAU

“Kiss and be friends.” The whisper light
Stole softly through the moonless night,
And crept into a little nest
Where waged a war of wild unrest.
The pillow ceased its whirling flight,
The little eyes tear-dimmed grew bright,
And both would fain a kiss invite,
For the soft-falling whisper guess’d;—
“Kiss and be friends.”

In bonds of joy they’ll soon unite,
For mother’s night tread echoes slight:
’Mid clasp and smile they are caress’d,
And eyes are closed in slumber blest.
Dream-lit they see the words shine bright;—
“Kiss and be friends.”

THE ETERNAL SONG

While moss grew deeper on the crannied stone,
While ivy round the ragged altar stole,
While cypress moved slow limbs and stood alone
And watched the churchyard gather in its toll;
While lovers met upon the trysting-day,
And plighted troth in broken words of love,
And grandsires whiled a pleasing hour away
Recalling dreams that early passion wove,—
The great broad ocean on the sea-beach fell,
And sang the low-toned song it first had sung,
And Time came by and heard the deepening knell,
His locks all silvery o'er his shoulder hung
And gravely said: "I may uplift the sod,
But this song is a monument of God."

THE GLEAM OF THE HEIGHTS

Awake my soul and drink deep beauty strong
From out the golden chalice of delight!
For lo! the furrowed glaze of yonder height
That never knew the murmur of a song,
Nor ever gathered round its peak a throng
Of soul-illumined memories, flashes bright
And throws enchantment to the wondering sight,
While gloom enwraps the valley far and long.
So through the width of Life's encircling day
There is a lustre that our souls can keep,
Nursed in the heights that stand from gloom apart,
Which one great Sun illumines far away:
A lustre dimmed not by the dreamless sleep
That stills the throbbing of the weary heart.

THE SONG OF THE SEA

(Composed on SS. Baltic, Mid-Ocean, Oct. 3, 1916)

Wrathful the grey-hung morning,
Foam-streaked the dashing sea,
Singing her song of yesterday,
Singing it wild and free.
Lash Splash
Wash Dash
Ripple Rill
Sings the lonely sea.

The sea-gulls come to the sea's lips
And kiss them with their wings;
The sea-wind whistles his evensong,
The gate of night outswings.
Lash Splash
Wash Dash
Ripple Rill
Endless the song of the lonely sea.

THE REASON FOR LIFE

Why are we living here? We are here for years of
unfolding,
Sowing the seeds of hope for Autumn to garner
her sheaves.
Mystic and silent the Weaver of purposes perfect is
moulding
Life from the wreckage of time, flame from the
sunken leaves.

Did I say that life is a cycle, futile, purposeless, weary,
Bled by a thousand wounds, rent by the knife of
fate,
Waiting the hollow tomb, the close of a winter dreary,
The callous summons of One—a tyrant in royal
state?

Ah no! the crocuses purple have lifted their heads to
the sunlight,
Touched by the dawn of day, brushed by the wings
of night,
And all the birds are atwitter, the lakes aglow with
the moonlight,
Holding in wombs of silver, vast worlds in endless
flight.

The sentinel hills weather-beaten, look down with a
proud defiance

On the sons of earth that have fled when the Blast
has withered the cheek.

Is there not a Watcher Who watches, a Voice that
speaks with reliance,

A Singer Who sings of hope, till the dirges of
death grow weak?

We're meant to live to the full. We are here for years
of unfolding,

Lifting the veil from the blind, hushing the sob in
the breast,

Lighting the tapers of faith, till the weary in wonder
beholding

Search for the stars of hope that jewel the sunless
west.

THE LAST HOUR

The sun-ray fell with swift touch strong
On the sun-bronzed brow, and the half-flushed
cheek,
And I was with her at evensong,
And she thought Death was an angel meek.

"I come not to mourn or shed a tear,
But wish you well on your peaceful way."
She answered: "Life has been very dear,
But I fearless pass to eternal day."

She needed not to whisper a prayer,
For the low-built room was a temple-shrine,
And she was a votary worshipping there,
Solemn, and silent, and making no sign.

Lay her softly in couch of sleep,
She was a rose in colour and soul;
O! never let a sad eye weep,
For she has reached her heavenly goal.

V.—FIRST EXPERIMENTS

THE BROOK'S SECRET

Little brook of silvery breast,
 Wandering to the sea!
Thy soothing tongue ne'er seems to rest
 In thine o'er-flowing glee.

O speak in tones that I can hear!
 For through thy wooded range
I list, and though thy face seems clear,
 Thy voice is wondrous strange.

I stay beside thee all the day,
 And pluck the flowers sweet,
And sometimes on the grass I lie
 And watch the cloudlets fleet;

And there I rest while thy sweet voice
 Lulls me in slumber soft;
And 'mid the music of thy joys
 My soul is borne aloft.

The brook in answer rippled on
 As if he fain would say:
From dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn
 I never stop nor play.

I laugh and ripple, flit and sing,
But yet I've work to do.
I'm busier than any thing—
That is my secret true.

MOIRA

(*A Reminiscence*)

On Fancy's wing free, O come thou with me
In footsteps light and fairy!
O come thou with me, little flower of glee,
Away to the uplands airy!
We'll revel light-hearted 'mid woodland and grove,
Through primrose-clad bowers we'll wander and rove,
And we'll mingle our glee with the lark's stream of
love,
Sweet rosy-cheeked Moira and I.

The dew-drop awinged has stolen away
To jewel each life-laden flower:
All sandalled with silver, fair Dawn wields her sway
And arouses each sleep-loving bower.
O Moira! the lark round thy casement flits near
And singeth to thee thus in silver tones clear:—
"Awake, little cherub, glad dayspring is here,
I have come to awaken thee."

He pipes his glad note with a rapturous trill,
His song floats out soft o'er the bay;
But Moira in Elfland is lingering still,
And hears not the trend of his lay.

I enter her nest with the dawnlight agleam
As it plays round her curls in full many a beam,
And she starts and looks up fresh from slumber and
dream,

And I clasp her and whisper, "'Tis dawn."

O Moira! 'tis dawn the birdies all sing,
Their song is of dawn and of thee,
A message of love do they bear on the wing
Fraught with soft sparkling melody.
Arise! little sunbeam of joy, O arise!
We'll gambol and sing 'neath the soft dawn-lit skies,
And the joys born of youth will shine deep in our eyes,
O Moira, sweet elfin of dawn!

I open the lattice, the zephyrs steal in
All laden with dawn's rippling joy,
Around Moira's cheek with a touch soft and light
They steal with no thought to annoy.
But we waive their caress and trip lightly away
O'er hillocks heath-paved which slope down to the bay,
And we scan where the magic of distance doth play
In the roseate hue of the dawn.
March, 1912.

ON THE LOSS OF THE R.M.S. "TITANIC"

(*Mid-Atlantic, April, 1912*)

I.

I saw thee, stately queen, ere thou had left
The tranquil waters of thy native shore;
I saw thee like a cradled giant kept,
Longing to burst thy bonds and hear the roar
Of the vast surging ocean, whose clear voice
Hath lured thee like a Siren to its breast.
Down, down it clasps thee to eternal rest,
Making its azure waters thy lone tomb.
In vision do I see thee leave the bay
In all the might and splendour of thy state,
But ere thy foam-track seaward fades away
A curse has swept thy decks,—the curse of Fate.
Its viewless arm is bared, it hovers round,
Swoops down and grips the wheel without sound.

II.

From out the Polar deep a Titan sails,
No Titan fashioned by man's puny skill,
But wrought with all the force that nature wields,
A force oft piercing mortals with a thrill.

O wraith! I see thee slowly glide along
All muffled o'er in robes of crystal glaze:
I seem to pierce thy thought's unchanging maze,
And hear thee gloating murmur thy death-song.
A shade of grim defiance sweeps thy form.
Thou knowest that a rival sails the main,
Thou creepest with a panther-glide to hurl
Thy might on one who scorns thy lordly train.
Out from the cave of darkness phantom-clad
With scarce a thrill, didst win thy victory sad.

III.

Let Britain prouder wave her noble flag,
And feel new glory set around her name,
That once again great heroes she hath reared
To add immortal lustre to her fame.
Though with a crash that rent the ship in twain,
While fell the starlight through a night-stained
pall,
A crash that sent swift horror over all
And sounded far upon the peaceful main,—
Yet did those heroes keep unwavering faith
When every known ray of hope was lost,
Though Death in grimmest shape their souls had
crost,
They met their doom fearless in triumph calm.
O! ye whose fame is spread o'er every clime,
Erect o'er these a trophy scorning time.





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